



Friday January 28, 2005 Edition

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## **Casey ag council looks at new ways to use tobacco funds**

**By BRENDA S. EDWARDS**  
Staff Writer

LIBERTY - New ideas concerning distribution of the tobacco settlement funds that were tossed around Wednesday by the Casey County Agricultural Council will be considered at a future meeting.

The council also agreed to split \$47,000 in leftover tobacco settlement funds equally to applicants who seek money for cattle handling facilities and goat programs.

Ed Lanham, ag agent in Marion County, who is in charge of the Central Kentucky Goat Producers program, said the Casey goat producers need the money to pay for goats they already have bought.

Marion Murphy, chairman of the county ag council, listed 14 ideas he has for

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the new year and said he wants to involve as many farmers as the council can. However, it is up to the farmer to sign up for programs on time and be able to pay the 50 percent match.

"It does not seem fair for the chairman of the board to get \$20,000 for programs while others get nothing," he said. "We have not been fair, but we want to give as many people as we can a chance."

Murphy thinks greater priorities should be put on the ag diversification program than beef because more money has been allocated for beef projects.

But beef producers said the county ranks eighth in the state in beef production, and there is currently a two-year waiting list in the cattle facilities program.

Anyone can apply for any of the 14 programs at any time and be put in the low priority, and the state will work out the details, said Greg Goode, council secretary.

### **Casey participates in six farm programs**

Casey currently participates in six of the farm programs, including beef, dairy, forages and goats, with 110 farmers involved, according to Murphy, who would like the number to remain the same next year and double in 2007.

It was suggested ending the beef genetics program and starting a new one in its place.

Jim Young, administrator of the beef program sponsored by the Casey County Beef Producers Association, said the genetic programs are being phased out so more cattle handling facilities can be offered. He said there are 120 names on the waiting list for cattle facilities.

Murphy learned it is up to the council to set a cap on funds and to prevent farmers who have already received money from getting additional funds until others have been served. He was told that funds appropriated for certain

programs must be used for that purpose.

When questioned about the audit of funds disbursed to Casey County farmers, the council learned everything was in order. The state did an audit of the beef, forage (administered by the county Soil Conservation District) and goat programs and found them to be in compliance, according to Brian Furnish and Maggie May of the state Office of Agricultural Policy.

Furnish said the money distributed through the ag council is not only for tobacco producers, but regulations say any farmer can get the money if he qualifies. There are 21 years left in the program if it is not altered, Furnish said.

### **Kentucky is only state that has 50 percent set aside for agriculture**

He said Kentucky is the only state that has 50 percent of the funds set aside for agriculture and goes directly to the farmers. Most states use the money for the general budget.

There was a question about a 15- or 16-year-old getting funds for a farm project. However, Furnish said a person has to be 18 to qualify, has to be a legal farmer with a serial number. A teen can sign a contract if he has a serial number. A couple (husband and wife) can qualify if each has a serial number.

When the program first began it was on a first-come first-served system, but new programs are on a scoring system.

Changes in applications cannot be made in the programs that are already in place, but new programs can go on the scoring system, according to Furnish.

When a farm is located on a county line, the farmer must register in one of the counties, and cannot qualify in the other county.

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